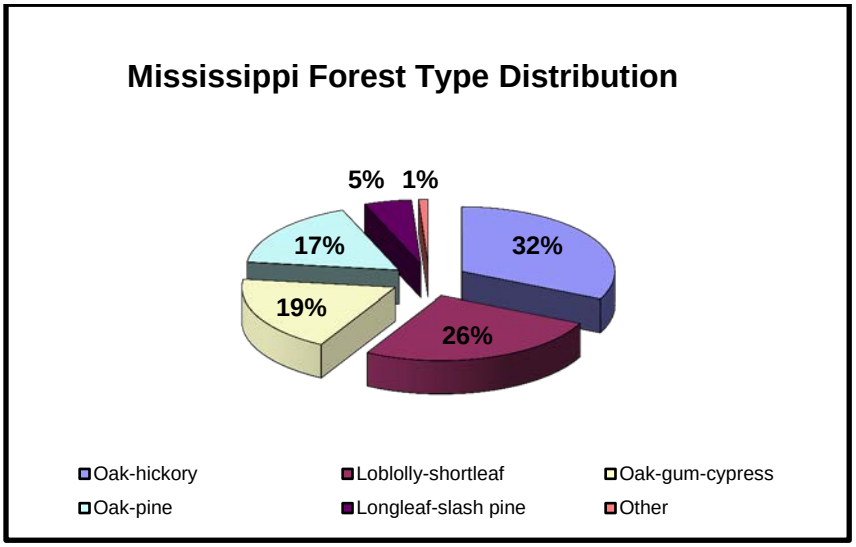
Mississippi

Forest Health Highlights 2013

The Resource

Mississippi's forests cover 19.9 million acres, more than 65% of the state's land area. Some 13.1 million acres of the states forested land is in non-industrial private ownership, while approximately 1.1 million acres are in national forests. Mississippi's forests are prized for their scenic beauty, supporting tourism and outdoor recreation and providing wildlife habitat throughout the state. Major forest types in the state include oak-hickory, loblolly and shortleaf pine, longleaf and slash pine, mixed oak-pine, and oak-gum-cypress.

USDA Forest Service



Mississippi Forest Health Highlights

Don't Move Firewood Campaign

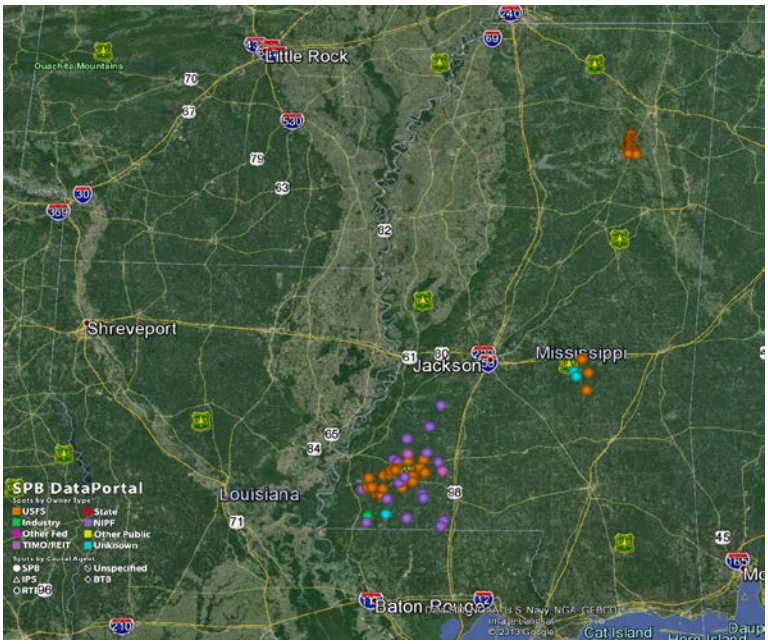
PROTECT TREES
FROM THE THREAT OF INVASIVE SPECIES
DontMoveFirewood.org
Transportation of invasive insects & diseases on firewood
can destroy trees in prime hunting & recreation areas.
A MESSAGE FROM THE MISSISSIPPI FORESTRY COMMISSION & USDA FOREST SERVICE

The MS Forestry Commission continued to spread the word about the "Don't Move Firewood" campaign. MFC employees used promotional items at 31 venues across the state, which included SEC football games, MS State Fair, MS Wildlife Extravaganza in Jackson and the Garden and Patio show in Jackson.

Redbay Ambrosia Beetle was detected for the first time in Jackson County, MS in July, 2009. This insect carries the fungus that causes Laurel Wilt Disease. Since its introduction to the Southeast, it has caused considerable mortality to redbay, swamp bay, sassafras, avocado, and other species of trees and shrubs in the Lauraceae. Current distribution records indicate the disease is present from North Carolina to Florida on the east coast, as well as coastal Mississippi and Alabama. During the summer of 2011 the disease was also discovered in Marengo Co., AL (east of Meridian, MS). The infestation in Mississippi continues to expand, and is now present throughout the majority of Jackson Co. in redbay, swamp bay, sassafras, as well as camphor tree. The beetle, but not the pathogen, has also been confirmed in Harrison County, MS. In 2013, laurel wilt was also confirmed in George county, MS. Collaborative research between MSU, MFC, and the USDA Forest Service has led to the conclusion that the beetle was spread to Mississippi by human movement of infested materials from beetles along the Atlantic Coast of the U.S., rather than through a spate introduction through a local port. Initial research into cold tolerance suggests that redbay ambrosia beetle may be able to spread through sassafras trees well into southern Canada.

Joe MacGown and John Riggins – Mississippi State University

Southern pine beetle (SPB) has historically been Mississippi's most significant forest insect pest. Populations statewide were very low from the mid 1990's-2011. However, in 2012, activity began to pick up. Over 1,000 SPB spots were detected on federal, state, and private lands in 2012, mostly in and around the Homochitto National Forest, and secondarily in and around the Bienville and Tombigbee National Forests. More than 1,100 acres have been affected. In 2013, 153 SPB spots affecting 210 acres have been detected so far, mostly in and around Homochitto, Bienville, and Tombigbee National Forests. The area around the Trace Ranger district in Chickasaw county seems to be the most affected county in North MS in 2013.



Due to the outbreak in 2012, a special project was funded with SPB prevention funds for Southwest MS in 2013. Three MS State University forestry students were hired from 6/1/13 – 8/14/13 to do one on one contacts with landowners in the area surrounding , and including, the Homochitto National Forest. The counties included Wilkinson, Adams, Jefferson, Amite, Franklin. Lincoln and Copiah counties. Southern Pine Beetle flights were conducted every two weeks over these counties, for a total of 173 flight hours. The students ground checked 120 "spots" and made 28 one on one contacts with private landowners.

Southern pine beetle (SPB) Prevention Program The MFC, in cooperation with Mississippi State University (Mississippi State University Extension Service, Forestry and Wildlife Research Center, and Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station), and the USDA Forest Service Forest Health Protection Southern Region continues to administer a comprehensive SPB Prevention/Education Program to teach landowners about the benefits of thinning for the reduction of SPB hazard. In addition to the educational aspects of this program, there is an associated statewide cost-share program to assist landowners in getting the pre-commercial and 1st commercial thinning accomplished. During 2013, utilizing 2011 SPB funding, we thinned 7610 acres with $563,250 paid to landowners, and utilizing 2012 funding, 3124 acres have been signed up for thinning with $234,300 set aside for landowner payments.

Kudzu is a non-native, invasive weed that aggressively spreads and outcompetes desirable plants, including trees forests in the Southeast. A kudzu control project was funded by the USFS to the MFC in 2012. A grant was awarded to the North Central MS RC&D to carry out this project in North MS. This project was funded in the amount of $250,000 for a two year project where the cost share covers 75% of the cost of treatment. The kudzu control will take place in the following counties on private lands: Benton, Carroll, Desoto, Grenada, Lafayette, Marshall, Panola, Pontotoc, Tallahatchie, Tate, Tippah, Tishomingo, Union and Yalobusha. In 2013, 98 landowners participated in the treatment program, 1158.75 acres were treated , with $115,585 paid to landowners to cover 75% of the costs.

Cogongrass is a non-native, invasive plant that has been spreading aggressively in Mississippi in recent years. It takes over native grasses and vegetation and is a fire hazard under pine plantations. The severity and extent of infestations have increased considerably in the disturbed forests following hurricane Katrina in 2005. The MS Forestry Commission has been funded for several years by the USFS under their redesign grants to continue the fight against this invasive weed. During 2013, we treated cogongrass in only Jones and Covington counties. This year, we have treated 532.85 acres for 185 landowners, with $194,637 going directly for treatments for landowners. Under this program, there is no cost to landowners for this service. Presently, it is costing approximately $365 per acre to treat cogongrass under this program.

J.R. Meeker, Florida Division of Forestry, Bugwood.org

Forest Health Assistance in Mississippi

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